DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 073 022 SO 005 377

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TITLE	Moral Development and the New Social Studies.
PUB DATE	23 Nov 72
NOTE	20p.; Speech presented at the National Council for the Social Studies, Boston, Massachusetts, November 23, 1972
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Affective Behavior; *Cognitive Processes; Educational Philosophy; Ethical Instruction; Inquiry Training; Learning Processes; *Moral Development; Moral Values; *School Role; *Social Studies; Social Values; Speeches; Values
IDENTIFIERS	*Dewey (John); Piaget (Jean)

ABSTRACT

New social studies curricula and methods need to be adapted to fundamental aims of education -- the stimulation of cognitive and moral development. Educational implications of Piaget's work in cognitive stage development and the author's work in moral stage development are based upon the cognitive developmental transition of John Dewey, who suggested that it is the social role of schools to develop active thought toward concern for social justice. Two previously neglected themes of Dewey which are elaborated in this work on moral stages, and which may correct certain basic gaps in the new social studies, concern education as supplier of the conditions for development through the cognitive and moral stages, and ethical principles as defining the aims of social education. The most important findings in cognitive development are the verifications of Piaget's description of adolescence as the period of development of abstract, reflective thought. Although social inquiry or analytic thinking cannot be taught, its development can be stimulated and extended. Moral stages lie at the core of political and social value decisions. A moral development approach, non-indoctrinative in its objectives and methods, that is concerned about moral action as well as moral reasoning, needs to be formed. (Author/SJM)

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Moral Development and the New Social Studies - The National Council of Social Studies

Boston - November 23, 1972

The invitation to speak to this group came at the right time. During the past two years my colleagues and I have finally taken the plunge from doing research to piloting social studies curricula. Accordingly I hope this occasion will provide some chance to get some feedback and guidance from all of you with greater experience. This is particularly important to me because we are not interested so much in creating new curricula as in adapting already existing new social studies curricula and methods to what I conceive to be the fundamental aims of education, the stimulation of cognitive and moral development. In stating my goals in this fashion I wish to acknowledge my debt to the greatest modern educational psychologist and philosopher, John Dewey. In 1895, Dewey said:

> ~~"Sometimes my moral sermons start with the Old Testament of education delivered to Plato. Today my sermon will start with the New Testament delivered to the aim of education which is growth or development both intellectual and moral~~. Only ethical and psychological principles can elevate the school to a vital institution in the greatest of all constructions - the building of a free and powerful character. Only knowledge of the order and connection of the stages in psychological development can insure the maturing of the psychical powers. Education is the work of supplying the conditions which will enable the psychological functions to mature in the freest and fullest manner."

The educational implications of Piaget's work in cognitive stage development and my work in moral stage development may be best understood as outgrowths of this statement of Dewey.

While Dewey clearly saw that education should be the supplying of the conditions of development through sequential cognitive and moral stages, 70 years of American educational psychology did nothing to aid Dewey's vision. Instead, it followed Thorndike's direction and viewed cognitive education

as a matter of instruction and behavioral learning and moral education as a matter of transmitting culturally accepted values and behaviors. You are fortunate enough to have the world's most distinguished representative of this Thorndike tradition, B. F. Skinner to speak to you later. For today, it is my job to present the major alternative vision of education, the cognitive-developmental tradition of Dewey. This tradition emigrated to Piaget's Switzerland where it was vastly enriched, and has now returned to this country and flourished this last ten years. My own work in moral development and moral education is part of it. The major theme of my talk, then, is the relation of this new-old cognitive-developmental psychology of moral and political development to that other trend of the sixties, the new social studies. Actually there is little intellectual effort needed to integrate these two trends because both trends stem directly from Dewey. I'm afraid I'm going to bore some of you by going over the Deweyite assumptions of the new social studies, but I get a bit alarmed when I see your workshop titles about being "with it." Dewey had an older conception of educational relevance that had nothing to do with being "with it," and it is this older conception which underlies the basic curriculum work of the sixties.

Before going into detail on the new social studies, I want to emphasize its larger Deweyite aim. This is the development of active thought about and concern for society. Such a development must necessarily center on a conception of social justice. Development of a sense of justice can, in turn, occur only in just schools.

While these Deweyite statements may sound like platitudes, they are entirely ignored by the dominant norms of education, which are still those of information-accumulation in the service of competitive academic achievement. With such norms, a hidden curriculum often develops, one which says that conformity to authority and competition for status are the values which count in the school.

It does no good to criticize the hidden curriculum, however, unless one can point to the mistakes in the explicit curriculum. Without changing the explicit curriculum, we can't change the hidden curriculum. A critique of the dominant curriculum need not be based on moral grounds alone. Recent research findings indicate that when I.Q. and social class are controlled for, grades and achievement tests based on acquisition of facts predict to almost nothing in later life except other school grades and achievement tests. It is not surprising to find that high school or college achievement do not predict to the deeper criteria of a worthwhile life, such as happiness, or moral contribution to a community. It is surprising and worth noting that achievement tests don't even predict to achievement in its gross American pragmatic meaning of mobility. High school students high on grades and achievement scores do no better economically than those low in achievement, college students high in achievement do no better than those low in achievement scores when social class background and I.Q. are controlled.

Most of you are not completely inspired by a vision of education's goals as upward mobility, but this is the only outside criterion which

the rationale of academic achievement tests marked on a curve suggest. The ethical fallacy of education for upward mobility is that it can only mean elevation of some at the expense of others. In the form of compensatory education, however, education for mobility seemed nobler in purpose. As compensatory education was translated into practice its goal remained confounded by its pragmatic relativism, however, its goal was elevating the entire country above the 50th percentile on achievement tests. My colleague Sandy Jencks has completed an expensive study showing that compensatory education has failed to diminish economic inequality and proposes income redistribution instead of education to serve social justice. You can think the thing through without a computer, however. Obviously, the only way the schools can contribute to social justice is by developing a sense of justice in the young. And this can only be done by making the schools more just.

Having stated a Deweyite vision of the social role of the schools, let us go into curricular details. There are five basic postulates of the new social studies, all derived from John Dewey. The first is the replacement of rote-learned facts by an emphasis upon active thought and reasoning. The Deweyite emphasis upon active thought is reflected in such terms as inquiry-learning, as learning the application of scientific methods to social material, as critical or reflective thinking. This Deweyite root of the new social studies is especially explicit in the influential work of Hunt and Metcalf but is evident in most of the other curricula as well.

We have said that the first Deweyite element of the new social studies is the emphasis on active thought. Second, related to this emphasis on active thought is a recognition of the distinction between the content of thinking and the form or process of thinking. If there is a desirable process of thinking, then the development of such thought process can be stimulated regardless of content areas. The same basic patterns of inquiry and judgment are involved whether the material is American history, civics, or East Asian culture. The third postulate of the new social studies, then, is its necessarily inter-disciplinary nature. The fourth related Deweyite postulate of the new social studies is the centrality of the problematic case, the use of relevant concrete cases representing social problems.

So far I have discussed four postulates of the new social studies which all refer to the cognitive, the scientific, the factual. Other postulates of the new social studies concern the role of value-judgment in social studies. Corresponding to the traditional emphasis upon social education as transmission of facts is the traditional emphasis upon transmission of the majority values of middle-class America. In the fifties there was great pressure on education not only to transmit the facts and technology needed to beat the Communists, but to transmit the traditional Americanism needed to ward off Communism. An example is the text, Civics for Americans, written by Clark, Edmonson and Dondineau in 1954. They say:

> "Civics for Americans is a book designed to help young people develop the characteristics of good citizenship. Primarily these characteristics are devotion to the Constitutional government of the United States, respect for law and appreciation of the advantages of a free-enterprise economy, faith in God and man and in the tenets which distinguish our way of life. Willingness to assume the responsibilities of school citizenship is essential to developing these characteristics."

The so-called revolution of values of the sixties has, of course, made this rhetoric of Americanism archaic. As I shall point out, however, it is easy to relapse into more current-sounding rhetoric which rests on the same obsolete ethical and psychological foundation. The foundation of the old civic educator was the transmission of unquestioned truths of fact and of unquestioned consensual values to a passively receptive child. The polite word which the psychology of the fifties chose for value-indoctrination was "political socialization." This transmission of consensual values was usually defined in terms of what I call a bag of virtues, a set of desirable personality traits. "A Boy Scout is loyal, clean, reverent and brave." A good citizen shows respect for law, responsibility, etc.

As Clark, Edmonson and Dondineau say:

> "Scientists have not as yet attempted to measure citizenship ability but we might find it interesting to try. We might find out whether a student would be placed in the stone, sponge, or spark group of citizens.
>
> Do you: 1) know the rules of your school and try to obey them; carry out assignments promptly and to the best of your ability? 2) work on committees in the classroom and in other school activity if asked to do so? etc..."

As I say, while such rhetoric is dead, the view of social education as the transmission of consensual values through a bag of virtues is far from dead. If patriotism and the Red Menace is out, ecology and the ecological menace is in. Today the good ecological boy scout picks up litter in the environment as yesterday he helped the old lady across the street. Where yesterday he was loyal and reverent, today he is world-minded and aware. In saying this I am, of course, not criticizing an

emphasis on ecological or world problems but only pointing to the limits of putting new content in old forms.

In contrast to the transmission of consensual values, the new social studies have been based on Dewey's conception of the valuing process. According to Dewey, factual scientific judgment and value judgments have important common characteristics and both represent aspects of a process of solution of problematic social situations. Just as there are rational, critical or reflective modes of reasoning about fact, there are rational, critical or reflective modes of valuing. Much of the new social studies effort to stimulate critical or reflective modes of valuing has gone under the banner of value clarification. In the work of Raths and Simon, this has an explicit derivation from Dewey.

The fifth postulate of the new social studies, then, was the need for clarification of values, for critical thinking about one's own value-assumptions in the context of situations of value-conflict. This, in turn, generates a sixth postulate of the new social studies, the need to focus upon situations and issues which are not only problematic but controversial. From this point of view, the new social studies generate objectives beyond analytic or reflective processes of reasoning and valuing. These objectives spring from a Deweyite recognition of social education as a process with forms of social interaction as its outcome. A Deweyite concern about action is not represented by a bag-of-virtues set of behavioral objectives. It is reflected in an active participation in the social process. This means that the classroom, itself, must be seen as an arena in

which the social and political process takes place in microcosm. One form of this concern is reflected in the Oliver, Shaver and Newman jurisprudential approach to the new social studies. This approach stresses the quality of discussion between students of controversial issues, discussion judged in terms of criteria of effective processes of conflict resolution in a democratic pluralistic society. Don Oliver has moved on from the discussion of controversial cases to a concern for processes of self-government and community in the school, an extension implicit in the Dewey canon.

While the new social studies of the sixties have worked out these Deweyite assumptions in a truly impressive way, they have neglected two central assumptions of the Deweyite canon. The first is the psychological assumption of cognitive and moral stages and the parallel assumption that education is supplying the conditions for development through the stages. The second is the philosophic recognition of ethical principles as defining the aims of social education. Just as there are non-arbitrary principles of scientific method and judgment, there are non-arbitrary ethical principles of value-judgment. In the social area, these principles are the principles of social justice elaborated by the liberal tradition from John Locke to Mill and Dewey, and most recently in John Rawls' major new book, A Theory of Social Justice.

It is these two themes of Dewey which have been elaborated in my work on moral stages and I believe these two themes correct certain basic gaps in the new social studies. Let me first turn to the easy part, the

psychological part. Let me start with cognitive development. For the purposes of the new social studies, the most important findings in cognitive development are the verifications of Piaget's description of adolescence as the period of development of abstract, reflective thought. More exactly, adolescence is the period of transition from logical inference as a set of concrete operations to logical inference as a set of formal operations or "operations upon operations." "Operations upon operations" imply that the adolescent can classify classification, that he can combine combinations, that he can relate relationships. It implies that he can think about thought, and create thought systems or "hypothetico-deductive" theories. This involves the logical construction of all possibilities--that is, the awareness of the observed as only a subset of what may be logically possible. In related fashion, it implies the hypothetico-deductive attitude, the notion that a belief or proposition is not an immediate truth but a hypothesis whose truth value consists in the truth of the concrete propositions derivable from it.

An example of the shift from concrete to formal operations in social studies may be taken from the work of E. A. Peel. Peel asked children what they thought about the following event: "Only brave pilots are allowed to fly over high mountains. A fighter pilot flying over the Alps collided with an aerial cable-way, and cut a main cable causing some cars to fall to the glacier below. Several people were killed." A child at the concrete-operational level answered:

"I think that the pilot was not very good at flying. He would have been better off if he went on fighting." A formal-operational child responded: "He was either not informed of the mountain railway on his route or he was flying too low. Also, his flying compass may have been affected by something before or after take-off setting him off course and causing collision with the cable."

The concrete-operational child assumes that if there was a collision the pilot was a bad pilot, the formal-operational child considers all the possibilities that might have caused the collision. The concrete-operational child adopts the hypothesis that seems most probable or likely to him. The formal-operational child constructs all possibilities and checks them out one by one.

Now what is striking about the development of formal operations is its closeness to the cognitive goals of the new social studies as reflective, hypothesis-testing and analytic thinking. When this is understood, certain difficulties and ambiguities in the new social studies become apparent. First, social inquiry or analytic thinking cannot be taught, although its development can be stimulated and extended. Our research findings indicate that only 53% of middle-class sixteen to eighteen-year-olds are fully capable of formal operational thought. If sizable portions of adolescents are incapable of hypothetical inquiry, they are unlikely to find th new inquiry training appealing or stimulating. No matter how relevant and colorful one makes problems of a society, these problems are still too

abstract to be problems for students who are not yet formal operational. Something similar is to be said with regard to notions of social science methods of generalization and proof involved in the new social studies. In these regards, Jerry Bruner's notions were misleading, his notion of the structure of the disciplines and his notion that any discipline could be taught at any cognitive level by appropriate techniques. Social science and legal disciplines, as patterns of thought, are extensions of a natural mode of thought, that of formal operations. They are not really relevant models of thought for children at an earlier stage of thought.

Let me turn now from cognitive to moral stages which I think are of even greater significance to social studies education. These stages are defined in the table in your handout. They have been verified by an eighteen-year longitudinal study of fifty American males interviewed every three years from ages ten to twenty-eight. The study indicates that all go through the same sequence of stages. While the rate of development of the stages and the terminal point of adult development are different for different individuals, the nature and the order of the stages of moral thought are the same for all. The cultural universality of the stages and their order has been confirmed in a number of cross-cultural studies including a longitudinal study in a Turkish village. Some of the age trends for the stages are presented in the figures in the handout.

When one speaks of moral stages, one does not generally think of something directly related to social and civic education. One thinks, perhaps, of the development of conscience, of an internal motive or monitor for moral decision. Conscience, however, is only one of ten major issues or institutions used to define the stages. Other issues are more familiar to social studies, the issues of law, of civil liberties, of authority, of property, etc. Each of these institutions is understood and valued in a new way at each new stage. To illustrate, we will cite the conceptions of civil rights of Johnny, a bright middle-class boy. He is responding to the following dilemma:

> Before the civil way, we had laws that allowed slavery. According to the law if a slave escaped, he had to be returned to his owner like a runaway horse. Some people who didn't believe in slavery disobeyed the law and hid the runaway slaves and helped them to escape. Were they doing right or wrong?

This dilemma involves the issues of conscience, of law, and of civil liberties. Johnny answers the question this way when he is ten.

> "They were doing wrong because the slave ran away himself, they're being just like slaves themselves trying to keep em away."

He is asked, "Is slavery right or wrong?" He answers:

> "Some wrong, but servants aren't so bad because they don't do all that heavy work."

Johnny's response is Stage 1, punishment and obedience orientation. Breaking the law makes it wrong; indeed, the badness of being a slave washes off on his rescuer. He does not yet have concepts of rights.

At age thirteen he is asked the same question. His answer is mainly a Stage 2 instrumental relativism of rights. He says:

> "They would help them escape because they were all against slavery. The South was for slavery because they had big plantations and the North was against it because they had big factories and they needed people to work and they'd pay. So the Northerners would think it was right but the Southerners wouldn't."

So early comes Marxist relativism of class interest. He goes on:

> "If a person is against slavery and maybe likes the slave or maybe dislikes the owner, it's okay for him to break the law if he likes, provided he doesn't get caught."

Skipping to age nineteen, in college, Johnny is Stage 4, orientation to maintaining a social order of rules and rights. He says:

> "They were right in my point of view. I hate the actual aspect of slavery, the imprisonment of one man ruling over another. They drive them too hard and they don't get anything in return. It's not right to disobey the law, no. Laws are made by the people. But you might do it because you feel it's wrong. If fifty thousand people break the law, can you put them all in jail? Can fifty thousand people be wrong?"

Johnny here is oriented to the rightness and wrongness of slavery, itself, and of obedience to law. He doesn't see the wrongness of slavery in terms of equal human rights but in terms of an unfair economic relation, working hard and getting nothing in return. The same view of rights in terms of getting what you worked for, leads Johnny to say about school integration:

> "A lot of colored people are now just living off of civil rights. You only get education as far as you want to learn, as far as you work for it, not being placed with someone else, you don't get it from someone else."

Rightness for John is defined by "50,000,000 Frenchmen can't be wrong." Here in Massachusetts, at least, we can say, "Yes, they ca.. be." John had not reached Stage 5 when last interviewed at age twenty-four. There is, however, hope; we have had some subjects move from Stage 4 to Stage 5 in their late twenties.

We do not know when Martin Luther King moved from Stage 5 to Stage 6 but he left us this Stage 6 statement concerning civil rights and civil disobedience:

> "One may well ask, 'How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?' The answer lies in the fact that there are two types of laws, just and unjust. One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. One has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. Any law that uplifts human personality is just, andy law that degrades human personality is unjust. An unjust law is a code that a numerical or power majority group compels a minority group to obey but does not make binding on itself. This is difference made legal."

You can see how this Stage 6 view takes into account the Stage 5 claims of the social contract and constitutional law. As I have illustrated the stages, they represent an increasing awareness of justice and a disentangling of justice from the particular accepted rules of the culture. A concern about justice is, however, present at every stage of development. I like to cite as an example, the earliest moral act of one of my sons. At the age of four my son joined the pacifist and vegetarian movement and refused to eat meat, because as he said: "It's bad to kill animals."

In spite of lengthy Hawk argumentation by his parents about the difference between justified and unjustified killing, he remained a vegetarian for six months. Like most Doves, however, his principles recognized occasions of just or legitimate killing. One night I read to him a book of Eskimo life involving a seal-killing expedition. He got angry during the story and said: "You know, there is one kind of meat I would eat, Eskimo meat. It's bad to kill animals so it's all right to eat them."

This eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth concept of justice is Stage 1. You will recognize, however, that it is a very genuine though four-year-old sense of justice. Fundamental to the sense of justice are the concepts of reciprocity and equality. At each stage these concepts take on a new form.

In stressing justice as the core of moral development, I need to note that justice or fairness is only one of four decision-making orientations, each available at every stage. These orientations are the rules-orientations, the pragmatic or utilitarian consequences orientations, the justice orientations and the conscience or ideal-self orientations. Each stage has a different concept ~~of each~~ of ~~these~~ rules, of utility, of fairness and of a good or ideal personality. But we have also been able to define substages at each stage: an A stage oriented to rules and pragmatic consequences and a B stage oriented to fairness. While individuals sometimes skip a B substage, most eventually end at a B or fairness substage of whatever highest stage they attain.

The examples I have used suggest that moral stages lie at the core of political or social value-decisions. To more systematically demonstrate this, Al Lockwood interviewed adolescents around two sets of dilemmas. The first were our standard set. The second were public policy dilemmas taken from Don Oliver's curriculum. Moral stage could easily be defined on both sets of dilemmas. There was a significant correlation of 42 between moral maturity on the standard moral dilemmas and on the policy dilemmas, with mental age or cognitive maturity controlled.

Given the existence of moral stages, what do you do about them? Certainly one wants to go beyond value-clarification. Value-clarification procedures have usually been based on the assumption that all values are relative. As summarized by Engel (1970) this position holds that:

> "In the consideration of values, there is no single correct answer but value clarification is supremely important. One must contrast value clarification and value inculcation.
>
> This is not to suggest, however, that nothing is ever inculcated. As a matter of fact, in order to clarify values, at least one principle needs to be adopted by all concerned. That principle might be stated: in the consideration of values there is no single correct answer. More specifically it might be said that the adequate posture both for students and teachers in clarifying values is openness."

While we agree with Engel in stressing openness and avoidance of inculcation, we do not agree that all values are relative nor do we teach children value-relativity, which in its strong sense is an unsound doctrine, both philosophically and in terms of social science fact. There

are culturally universal moral values differently conceived at each stage. The order of the stages also is universal and it is an order of moral adequacy, an increasing approximation to a rational philosophy, as conceived by moral and political philosophers. Rawls' Theory of Social Justice is a good statement of Stage 6.

If relativism is an incorrect philosophic view, then the educational objective of stimulation of moral stage development cannot be called indoctrinative. First, it is non-indoctrinative because it is not addressed to transmitting specific value-content but to stimulating a new way of thinking and judging. Second, it is non-indoctrinative because it is not imposing something alien on the student. Movement to the next stage is movement in a direction natural to him, it is movement in the only direction he can go. Finally, it is non-indoctrinative because the core of moral stages is a sense of rights and justice. Our whole objection to indoctrination presupposes a sense of rights, but such a sense of human rights can only occur through the process of moral development.

We have discussed developmental moral education as non-indoctrinative in its objectives. It is also non-indoctrinative in its methods which are not very different than methods of value-clarification. As first elaborated by Moshe Blatt, our classroom method stressed use of the kind of dilemmas and the kind of argument between students which evokes cognitive-conflict, a sense of disequilibrium about one's own position.

Second, it involved confrontation of students at adjacent stages. Laboratory studies by Turiel and Rest had demonstrated that adolescents comprehend all stages below their own and sometimes the next stage up, and that they prefer the highest stage they comprehend. When adolescents were exposed to all stages, the most change occurred to exposure to the next stage up.

Blatt could make use of these principles because most classrooms contain students at three stages. Blatt had students at the two lowest stages confront one another, then moved to a confrontation with the third stage. Blatt conducted these discussions with junior high and high school students in ghetto schools, in suburban schools, in working-class white schools. His results held across these variables. Each classroom showed significant upward movement in moral thought, compared to controls. Amount of change varied from class to class. In Blatt's best class two-thirds of the children moved to the next stage up. In his worst, only 15% moved a stage. All classrooms' change was to the next stage up. And all classrooms remained significantly above controls on one-year follow-up.

Blatt's work was a good beginning but we are still far from having optimal methods for a developmental social studies. Of even more importance, we need to expand Blatt's procedures to form a developmental approach to social studies actually usable in the schools. Two pilot projects supported by the Ford Foundation are attempting to do that. It did not take much persuasion by Bill Leary, Boston's superintendent, to get us to start a project which would integrate

our moral development approach with an existing new social studies curriculum. This was Bill Gibson's law curriculum for inner-city adolescents, as elaborated by Phil Gibbons. Gibbons and Phil Moskoff are relating points of substantive law to a Blatt-type discussion of moral and legal dilemmas at Jamaica Plain High School. If, as we hope, there is substantial change through this program, we plan to extend it to other Boston schools. I may add that the marriage of moral discussion and law is natural. At lower stages there is great difficulty distinguishing the legal and the moral, and students often demand a knowledge of the law to approach a moral dilemma. Our law project is cooperating with a parallel history project of Ted Fenton's incorporating the moral discussion approach. A second elementary school project led by Bob Selman is the subject of a workshop tomorrow. This project involved developing verbal dilemmas and pretesting to see whether discussing the dilemmas was something that engaged first and second graders. Satisfied that it was, we consulted on filmstrip adaptations of these dilemmas. We are now pretesting and post-testing children involved in these filmstrip discussions led by four different teachers. Our hope is that these two projects will help communicate to teachers an understanding of the developmental approach which they can apply to any new social studies curricula.

You will wonder whether we are concerned about moral action as well as moral reasoning. When Blatt was working in a suburban school, the principal said, "What are you doing all this verbal moral discussion for when we need your help with moral behavior problems of pregnancy, drugs

and theft." I told him we'd like to work on moral action but he had to understand that the core of moral action was a sense of justice. To develop moral action we would want the students to express their sense of justice as well as talk about it and make the school more just. If he indeed wanted to make his school more just, we would be glad to help him. That ended his interest in getting our help on moral behavior. We did find a prison that was interested, however. For the past two years we have aided the prison staff to develop a just community approach in one of the cottages based on a self-government community meeting, as well as moral discussion. While there have been many ups and downs, it has gone amazingly well and we think we can stimulate moral action as well as moral thought.

When we have translated this experience into creating a more just school, I'll want to come back and talk again.